

Joint Cabinet/Executive Committee

01 August 2024

Minutes

*Held at Council Chamber, Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon
Meeting commenced: 6.00 p.m. Meeting ended: 7.00 p.m.*

Present: Councillor Susan Juned (Chair) Councillors L Coles, G Cowcher, S Juned, I Davison and C King

Apologies: Councillor L Williams

Also in attendance: Councillor Boad (Liberal Democrat Group Leader Warwick District Council, Observer)
Councillor Crump (Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Observer)
Councillor Day (Conservative Group Leader Warwick District Council, Observer)
Councillor Falp (WRA Group Leader Warwick District Council, Observer)
Councillor Milton (Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Warwick District Council, Observer)
Councillor Passingham (Green Party Group Leader Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Observer)
Councillor Whalley-Hoggins (Conservative Group Leader Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Observer)

1. Appointment of Chair

In the absence of a Chair, the Head of Development (Stratford-on-Avon District Council) opened the meeting and called for nominations for Chair.

Accordingly, it was proposed by Councillor Coles and seconded by Councillor Davison, that Councillor Juned be appointed as Chair for the meeting.

There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Juned be appointed as Chair up to the next meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

See above.

3. Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest received.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 were confirmed and signed.

5. Meeting Housing Growth Needs through the South Warwickshire Local Plan

Councillor Cowcher (Deputy Leader - Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor King (Place Portfolio Warwick District Council)

An update report was circulated to all members prior to the meeting and a copy appended to these minutes.

A short adjournment was taken at this point in order for Councillors to read the update report.

On the request of the Chair, the Head of Place, Arts & Economy (Warwick District Council) presented the update report and noted that the Government had published a consultation on major changes to the planning system. As a consequence, officers suggested a new suite of recommendations to members.

Thereafter, consideration was given to the housing needs figures to be used to inform the Preferred Options draft of the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP).

The options available to the Joint Cabinet/Executive Committee were to accept the proposals in the accompanying Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) report, not to accept the advice, or to use another migration scenario presented in the HEDNA or a different housing need figure. In light of the published changes to the planning system, it was noted that the Government proposed a new standard method for calculating housing need and that the resulting housing need figures would become mandatory. This presented an alternative option to members of taking into account the draft standard method.

In response to a question regarding Birmingham City and Coventry City figures, members were advised that unmet needs required proper consideration under the Duty to Cooperate. In regard to timescales, it was anticipated that the current timescale was reasonable and that green belt sites were already being reviewed.

In response to questions regarding whether an additional call for sites would be made, it was still unclear until numbers had been finalised, but the green belt sites review would be published on the respective

Councils' websites once available. The definition of grey belt had been given as previously developed land within the green belt which did not fulfil the five purposes of green belt. Once confirmation had been received regarding the methodology being used, there would be a clearer timetable. It was intended that combined and separate responses from both Councils would be made to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation.

Councillor Milton, Chair of the Warwick District Council (WDC) Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) provided feedback from the meeting held on 30 July 2024. The Committee had recommended that given the uncertainty introduced by the Government announcement, the numbers referred to in Recommendation (2) be 'noted', rather than 'agreed'.

Councillor Crump, Chair of the Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) OSC, provided feedback from the meeting held on 19 July 2024. The Committee was satisfied with the reasoning for using the HEDNA rather than the standard method for calculating housing figures, but queried methods that other authorities in the local area used and raised issues around infrastructure.

Officers confirmed that some of the issues raised during the ensuing discussion, particularly surrounding infrastructure and viability, would be clearer once the Government response to the consultation had been received.

Following which, a proposal to reject the recommendation from the WDC OSC was put forward and duly seconded, which was voted upon and agreed.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the technical work that had been undertaken to understand housing needs for South Warwickshire to inform the work on the South Warwickshire Local Plan be noted;
- (2) That the housing need figures contained in the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), set out in Table 1 of the agenda report, be endorsed as the basis for preparing the Preferred Options document of the South Warwickshire Local Plan, noting also that an element of flexibility was recommended to be included within the Preferred Options document for the reasons set out in the agenda report;
- (3) That on 30 July, after the publication of the agenda report, the government launched a public consultation on a series of major changes to the planning system which, if implemented, would substantially impact on the South Warwickshire Local Plan, including a new 'standard

method' for determining the minimum number of homes that were needed, be noted;

- (4) That this revised standard method would require very many more homes across South Warwickshire to meet local needs than was currently contained within the HEDNA and elsewhere within the agenda report - a total of 2,178 homes per year, be noted; and
- (5) That continuing to prepare the Preferred Options draft of the South Warwickshire Local Plan be supported, and that this continued to be done on the basis of the subregional HEDNA (Recommendation (2)) be agreed, but mindful of the need for sufficient flexibility to accommodate the new 'standard method' if required, noting that this was still to be confirmed, and that future drafts of the South Warwickshire Local Plan would have the opportunity to reflect on the outcome of the current public consultation on the proposed changes and any development strategy revised accordingly.

NOTE: This item is subject to call-in to the OSC as it is a key decision

6. Proposed Changes to the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) Part A Methodology for the South Warwickshire Local Plan

Councillor Cowcher (Deputy Leader - Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor King (Place Portfolio Warwick District Council)

Consideration was given to changes to the methodology criteria in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) Part A, to be used to inform the Preferred Options draft of the South Warwickshire Local Plan.

The options available to the Joint Cabinet/Executive Committee were to accept the proposals or not to accept the proposals.

Councillor Crump, Chair of the Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), provided feedback from the meeting held on 19 July 2024. The Committee supported the proposals in principle but requested detail of those sites that would change from HELAA Part A to HELAA Part B.

In response to the request from OSC that the new methodology not be endorsed until further evidence had been considered by the Committee, it was advised that the Head of Development (SDC) had prepared an update note for OSC members, in order to provide reassurance.

During the debate, issues regarding potential floodplain development sites, wildlife site protection and biodiversity net gain (BNG) sites were raised. Officers confirmed that should a site be identified for

development, verification that it met the threshold for wildlife site protection would be undertaken and any site would be required to comply with the BNG legislation.

Following which, it was

RESOLVED:

(1) That the following Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Part A methodology changes be endorsed, to inform the work on the South Warwickshire Local Plan:

- a. Assessment of Agricultural Land Quality be moved from HELAA Part A to HELAA Part B;
- b. Assessment of Potential Wildlife Sites be moved from HELAA Part A to HELAA Part B;
- c. Flooding criteria be amended to state the following:

If a site was wholly or substantially within flood zones 2 or 3, or wholly subject to surface water flooding, it would be considered as 'failed' and graded in the following way:

- If 100% of a site was subject to surface water flooding, it would be graded 'Red';
- If 0 – 99% of a site was subject to surface water flooding, it would be graded 'Amber';
- If 0% of a site was subject to surface water flooding, it would be graded 'Green'; and

(2) That the undertaking of further minor amendments to the HELAA Part A methodology be delegated to the Head of Development at Stratford-on-Avon District Council and the Head of Place, Arts and Economy at Warwick District Council, in consultation with the respective Portfolio Holders for each Council, to ensure risk of delay to the overall timetable for the South Warwickshire Local Plan be minimised.

NOTE: This item is subject to call-in to the OSC as it is a key decision

7. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

Note: An increase in the number of meetings was suggested at this point. Officers confirmed that meetings would become more frequent in the near future as work on the Plan progressed.

CHAIR

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Update Report for Joint Cabinet/Executive Committee 1st August 2024

Agenda Item 5

On 30th July 2024 the Government published a consultation on major changes to the planning system. The eight-week consultation runs to 24th September 2024. The consultation which is available online at [Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system) is seeking views on a series of national planning policy reforms, including the proposed approach to revising the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) [National Planning Policy Framework: draft text for consultation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk). In particular, the proposals reverse many changes made to the NPPF in December 2023.

Of particular relevance to this report and the issue of housing needs, is the proposal to (1) change the methodology for calculating the standard housing need (aka the standard method), and (2) to make the application of this calculation mandatory for the purposes of the preparation of local plans.

In summary, the existing standard method (introduced in 2018) comprises a baseline of household projections produced by the Office for National Statistics (currently the 2014-based projections) which are then adjusted to take account of affordability. In some circumstances that figure is then capped to limit the increase. Finally, an urban uplift of 35% is applied to the 20 most populous urban local planning authorities.

In contrast, the proposed standard method:

- a) uses a baseline set at a percentage of existing housing stock levels (0.8% reflecting the 0.89% per year growth in housing stock nationally over the past 10 years), designed to provide a more stable baseline that drives a level of delivery proportionate to the existing size of settlements
- b) tops up this baseline by focusing on those areas that are facing the greatest affordability pressures, using a stronger 3-year average affordability multiplier to increase this baseline in proportion to price pressures (i.e. 0.6% compared to 0.25%), as opposed to the most recent data (which can fluctuate)
- c) removes arbitrary caps and the 35% urban uplift

The results (dwellings per annum) of this proposed approach have been published alongside the consultation documents at [outcome-of-the-proposed-revised-method.ods \(live.com\)](https://live.com/outcome-of-the-proposed-revised-method.ods). In summary:

LPA	Current Standard Method	Proposed Standard Method	Change
Stratford-on-Avon District	553	1,098	+545
Warwick District	653	1,080	+427
Birmingham City	7,174	4,974	-2,200
Coventry City	3,081	1,527	-1,554
Warwickshire Sub-region	2,315	3,975	+1,660
West Midlands Region	2,4734	31,754	+7,020

As can be seen, the combined total housing need figure for South Warwickshire is proposed as 2,178 dwellings per annum.

This figure excludes any additional homes that South Warwickshire may need to accommodate through our Duty to Co-operate obligations.

The consultation also proposes transitional arrangements, although given the early stage of preparation of the South Warwickshire Local Plan, the expectation is that it would be prepared in accordance with the new NPPF "as quickly as possible". The Government has expressed a desire for complete local plan coverage in England by the end of the current parliament.

Finally, the proposed approach set out here is a draft for consultation and the policy objectives, methodology and resulting figures are therefore subject to confirmation. Whilst the consultation closes on 24th September, officers are not aware of an anticipated date for publication of the revised NPPF itself.

Revised Recommendations to replace those in the published report:

- 1. That Members note the technical work that has been undertaken to understand housing needs for South Warwickshire to inform the work on the South Warwickshire Local Plan.**
- 2. That Members endorse the housing need figures contained in the Housing & Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) set out in Table 1 below as the basis for preparing the Preferred Options document of the South Warwickshire Local Plan, noting also that an element of flexibility is recommended to be included within the Preferred Options document for the reasons set out in this report.**
- 3. That members also note that on 30th July, after the publication of this report, the government launched a public consultation on a series of major changes to the planning system which if implemented would substantially impact on the South Warwickshire Local Plan including a new "standard method" for determining the minimum number of homes that are needed.**
- 4. That members note that this revised standard method would require very many more homes across South Warwickshire to meet local needs than is currently contained within the HEDNA and elsewhere within this report; a total of 2,178 homes per year.**
- 5. That members support continuing to prepare the Preferred Options draft of the SWLP and agree that this should continue to be done on the basis of the subregional HEDNA (R2 above) but mindful of the need for sufficient flexibility to accommodate the new "standard method" if required, noting that this is still to be confirmed, and that future drafts of the SWLP will have the opportunity to reflect on the outcome of the current public consultation on the proposed changes and revise any development strategy accordingly.**